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New Satellite Coverage Will ‘Limit Effects of Natural Disasters’ South Americans To Benefit From Emerging Global Earth Observation Network

Buenos Aires, January 16 – Shifting a spacecraft from its current position above the equator in the West to a new spot in orbit will greatly improve environmental satellite coverage of the Western Hemisphere, especially over South America. News of the shift was announced today in Buenos Aires by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Comisión Nacional de Actividades Espaciales (CONAE), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

By significantly improving satellite detection of such natural hazards as severe storms, floods, drought, landslides, volcanic ash clouds, and wildfires, the shift will help protect lives and property in North, Central, the Caribbean and South America. The shift will further strengthen the WMO’s World Weather Watch Global Observing System. It will allow for improved prediction, response and follow-up and expanded understanding of how our Earth system works. Such initiatives are vital. Nearly half the disasters in South America are caused by flooding. In February 2005, massive flooding and landslides in low-lying coastal areas of Venezuela, Guyana and Colombia caused nearly 100 deaths and left tens of thousands of South Americans homeless.

“Repositioning NOAA’s GOES-10 geostationary satellite will help limit the effects of natural disasters in our region and improve energy and water resource management and over-all economic development, all key elements of the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), of which Argentina is a member country,” said Conrado Franco Varotto, Executive and Technical Director, CONAE, and chair, Committee on Earth Observation Satellites.

By linking many thousands of individual pieces of technology as one sustained, comprehensive global system, GEOSS will, over the next decade, integrate 21st century technology, making it more reflective of the planet it observes, predicts and protects. In addition to Argentina and the U.S., 58 other countries, the European Commission and 43 international organizations are active supporters of GEOSS.

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ADD ONE

New Satellite Coverage Will Help Protect South America

Strengthening satellite detection of severe weather and other natural hazards in the Western Hemisphere will be a key element of the new global network. “A benchmark of GEOSS is free and open access and exchange of environmental satellite and other data, and the GOES-10 move enables the U.S. to improve the quality and quantity of data available to our Latin American partners, especially for near-term forecasting,” said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. John J. Kelly, Jr., NOAA deputy undersecretary for oceans and atmosphere, and the U.S. Permanent Representative to the World Meteorological Organization.

Comodore Miguel Angel Rabiolo, General Director of the Servicio Meteorológico Nacional of Argentina, said: “We are pleased with NOAA’s response to the South American hydro-meteorological community’s request for a more continuous data stream. The move of GOES-10 will allow us to optimize the availability of satellite information in order to improve weather monitoring and forecasting. Without any doubt, GEOSS, the Earth Observation Partnership of the Americas (EOPA) initiative, and the WMO Space Program play a critical role in the forecasting of severe meteorological events and in mitigating the effects of the natural disasters.”

The GOES-10 shift is expected to begin in October 2006, months after a new GOES satellite, GOES-N, launches in February. Repositioning the spacecraft is part the EOPA initiative. Additionally, the president of the WMO Regional Association for South America requested that NOAA consider the shift. Through EOPA, NOAA is exploring partnerships with countries and scientific organizations in the Americas and the Caribbean to share Earth observations, develop and strengthen data networks and enhance delivery of benefits to society. By ensuring that users in the Americas and Caribbean can receive and fully utilize data from current and next generation observing systems, EOPA will help both policymakers and other citizens understand their environment and make informed decisions of economic and other societal importance.

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<http://www.oso.noaa.gov/goes/>

<http://www.wmo.int>

<http://earthobservations.org/>